EXHIBIT A

By placing migrants in Social Security's "death master file," the Trump administration is seeking to cut off their access to credit cards, bank accounts and other financial services.

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By **Alexandra Berzon, Hamed Aleaziz, Nicholas Nehamas, Ryan Mac and Tara Siegel Bernard**
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Since taking office, the Trump administration has moved aggressively to revoke the temporary legal status of hundreds of thousands of immigrants who were allowed into the country under President Joseph R. Biden Jr.

Now, the administration is taking drastic steps to pressure some of those immigrants and others who had legal status to "self-deport" by effectively canceling the Social Security numbers they had lawfully obtained, according to documents reviewed by The New York Times and interviews with six people familiar with the plans.

The goal is to cut those people off from using crucial financial services like bank accounts and credit cards, along with their access to government benefits.

The effort hinges on a surprising new tactic: repurposing Social Security's "death master file," which for years has been used to track dead people who should no longer receive benefits, to include the names of living people who the government believes should be treated as if they are dead. As a result of being added to the death database, they would be blacklisted from a coveted form of identity that allows them to make and more easily spend money.

Earlier this week, the names of more than 6,300 migrants whose legal status had just been revoked were added to the file, according to the documents.

The initial names are limited to people the administration says are convicted criminals and "suspected terrorists," the documents show. But officials said the effort could broaden to include others in the country without authorization.

Their "financial lives," Leland Dudek, the Social Security Administration's acting commissioner, wrote in an email to staff members, would be "terminated."

The move is the latest in an extraordinary series of actions by the Trump administration, pushed by Elon Musk and the Department of Government Efficiency to harness personal data long considered off limits to immigration authorities in order to advance President Trump's vision for a mass migrant crackdown. This week, several top officials at the Internal Revenue Service moved to resign after the tax agency said it would help locate undocumented immigrants.

In another previously unreported development, Mr. Dudek in February reached an agreement with the Department of Homeland Security that would provide the last known addresses of 98,000 people to Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the federal agency responsible for deporting undocumented immigrants, other documents and interviews show. Personal information held by Social Security had been closely guarded under previous administrations, according to 12 current and former officials who said the agency had not engaged in such widespread data sharing with immigration authorities before.

By using Social Security data to freeze out immigrants, the administration is conscripting a broadly popular agency — one that exists to send benefits primarily to retired Americans and people with disabilities — in its effort to unwind what Mr. Trump has derided as the "open border" policies of his Democratic predecessor.

The new enforcement role for Social Security is raising fears that faulty data could result in people, including American citizens, mistakenly or improperly being placed on the list, upending their financial lives, according to interviews with current and former employees.

Many of the changes at the Social Security Administration are being driven by Elon Musk, who has spouted unfounded conspiracy theories about fraud perpetrated by undocumented immigrants. Jim Vondruska for The New York Times

"Immigration enforcement is not within the scope of the Social Security Administration," said Jason Fichtner, who held several senior positions at Social Security, where he was appointed by President George W. Bush. "The potential for errors can be very consequential."

Elizabeth Huston, a White House spokeswoman, said the changes at Social Security would help advance the president's immigration goals. "President Trump promised mass deportations, and by removing the monetary incentive for illegal aliens to come and stay, we will encourage them to self-deport," she wrote in a statement. "He is delivering on his promise he made to the American people."

Many changes at the Social Security Administration are being driven by Mr. Musk, who has spouted unfounded conspiracy theories about fraud perpetrated by undocumented immigrants, and about the agency sending billions of dollars to dead people. Mr. Trump has picked up many of those claims.

The billionaire, a top adviser to Mr. Trump, has also said without evidence that Democrats used the agency to grant immigrants Social Security numbers, making them eligible for benefits that kept them in the United States so they could shift the country's demographics.

At the same time, Mr. Musk's team has targeted the Social Security agency for cuts, alarming beneficiaries. Staff reductions have hobbled some local field offices, and recipients say it has become harder to receive services. Now, under Mr. Trump, the agency is taking on an additional mission of immigration enforcement, including those who entered under the Biden administration, according to a senior White House official not authorized to speak publicly.

Mr. Biden allowed many migrants to enter the country temporarily as a way to incentivize them to avoid crossing the border illegally. Those people became eligible to work in the United States, receive Social Security numbers and in some cases receive federal benefits.

More than 500,000 migrants from Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Haiti came under one of the so-called parole programs during the Biden administration that allowed them to fly into the country, if they had financial sponsors and passed security checks. Another 900,000 migrants used CBP One, a phone application used by the Biden administration, to enter at ports of entry and were given the opportunity to remain and work in the United States.

The Trump administration has targeted both programs. The program allowing migrants to fly in is scheduled to end this month — and with it legal status for migrants already here, pending court challenges. Trump administration officials have also begun to revoke the parole of migrants who entered with the app.

Venezuelan migrants waiting to cross into the United States after receiving an asylum hearing through the CBP One app in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Alejandro Cegarra for The New York Times

On Tuesday, Aram Moghaddassi, a software engineer working for DOGE, sent Mr. Dudek the first batch of names to be added: the list of more than 6,300 immigrants homeland security officials had identified as having temporary legal status but who were now either on what he described as "the terrorist watch list," or had been flagged as having "F.B.I. criminal records," the documents show. The people's parole status had been revoked that same day, Mr. Moghaddassi wrote.

The list included a 13-year-old and seven other minors, raising fears inside the agency that it was overly broad, according to one person familiar with the list who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive information.

The White House official said that nearly 1,000 of the migrants had received federal benefits worth a total of roughly $600,000 before their parole was cut off, including Medicaid, unemployment insurance and federal student loans — an average of $600 per person.

Mr. Moghaddassi did not respond to a request for comment.

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Although the agency has renamed the death list the "ineligible master file," according to the documents reviewed by The Times, it has not developed a new way to mark people as being ineligible for benefits. For now the immigrants added are being given supposed dates of death, according to two people familiar with the process.

Martin O'Malley, who served as commissioner of the Social Security Administration under Mr. Biden, described the strategy as inhumane.

"It's tantamount to financial murder," Mr. O'Malley said.

Andrew Biggs, who served at the agency during the George W. Bush administration, suggested that such changes would help enact Mr. Trump's immigration policy.

"If you favor immigration enforcement, this makes sense," he said.

Trump administration officials have presented the change as a way to fight crime.

In a memo addressed to Mr. Dudek on Monday, Kristi Noem, the homeland security secretary, wrote that the plan would "prevent suspected terrorists who are here illegally" from having "privileges reserved for those with lawful status."

She did not say how the administration was determining if someone was a "suspected terrorist."

The Death List

The Social Security agency's death list is one of its most important data sets. Officials maintain it by collecting death records from state health records, funeral homes and family members, with roughly three million new death reports added each year. That prevents improper payments from going out.

Officials also share that information with other federal agencies to ensure that people who are dead no longer get benefits. And the Commerce Department sells a version of the list to banks, credit bureaus and other financial institutions that want to avoid operating accounts for scammers using stolen Social Security numbers.

The Social Security agency's death list is one of its most important data sets. Haiyun Jiang for The New York Times

Those who have been put on the list mistakenly while still alive have reported calamitous effects, such as having their homes foreclosed and bank accounts canceled. In order to be removed, they have to go to field offices to try to prove their identity, a process known internally as "resurrection." But even then the problem can take months to fix, or longer.

The repurposing of the death list, as well as the agency sharing addresses with immigration authorities, could face challenges under the federal tax and privacy laws that govern the maintenance of Social Security data, according to former officials and agency experts.

"The Social Security Administration has a legal obligation to keep accurate data to administer its programs, and strict laws govern the use and exchange of that data," said Kathleen Romig, the director of Social Security and disability policy at the

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a left-leaning think tank.

Trump officials have said that they want to modernize the nation's deportation system by combining sets of data held by different agencies that have long been siloed, part of a broader effort to link personal data about the public scattered across the government.

Documents reviewed by The Times show that DOGE is playing an important role in that process, including in the agreement to share addresses that was struck in February.

Under the terms of that arrangement, immigration officials agreed to send thousands of Social Security numbers to the Social Security Administration, which would match them with personal data and send back associated addresses.
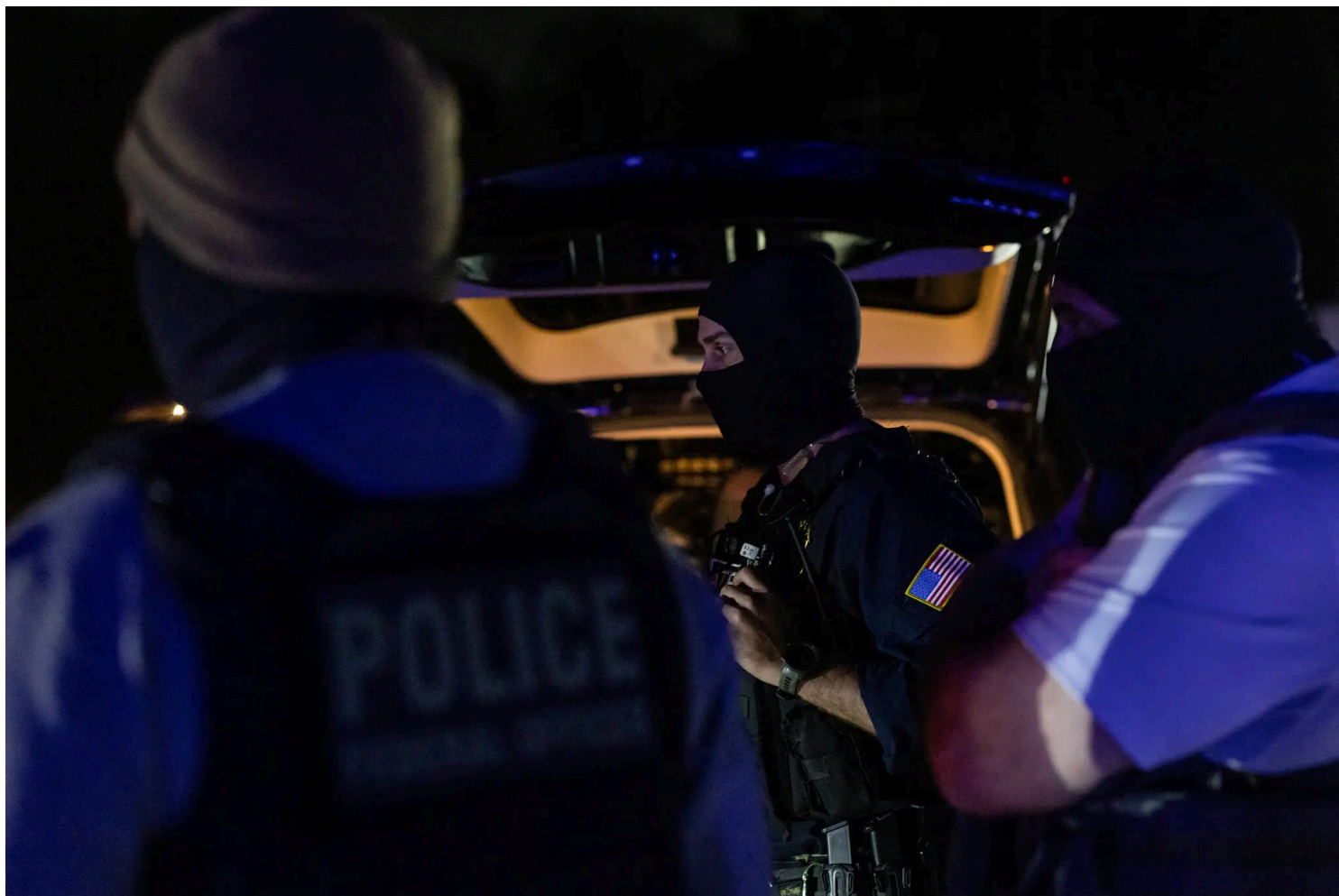
Federal law enforcement agents led by ICE preparing for a raid in Rex, Ga., in February. Carlos Barria/Reuters

ICE collects as much information as possible to target, surveil and detain undocumented immigrants, although addresses in their records can sometimes be outdated.

Mr. Dudek gave permission to DOGE engineers and ICE leaders to use his agency's data for law enforcement, the documents show. Michael Russo, the Social Security Administration's former chief information officer and a member of Mr. Musk's team, also asked for the information to be sent to D.H.S. urgently.

Neither agency would confirm if the data had been sent.

Social Security regulations state that the agency may disclose information for law enforcement purposes in certain circumstances, including when a person has been indicted or convicted of "violent crimes," and to investigate entitlement fraud. During the first Trump administration, the Department of Homeland Security, which oversees ICE, also pushed for broad access to Social Security data, but was rebuffed based on privacy concerns, according to two people familiar with the negotiations.

Among the DOGE associates privy to the data-sharing agreement were Akash Bobba, a recent college graduate who gained access to the Social Security systems in early February, according to court records; Scott Coulter, who was named as Social Security's chief information officer last month; and Marko Elez, an engineer who resigned from his government positions this year after being linked to an X account with racist posts that pushed for immigration policies based on eugenics.

After Mr. Trump and Vice President JD Vance called for him to be brought back into DOGE, Mr. Elez was quietly rehired.

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